

## COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM

# Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

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## Description of the Examination

The Subject Examination in Analyzing and Interpreting Literature covers material that is usually taught in a general two-semester undergraduate course in literature. Although the exam does not require familiarity with specific works, it does assume that the student has read widely and perceptively in poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction. The questions are based on passages supplied in the test. These passages have been selected so that no previous experience with them is required to answer the questions. The passages are taken primarily from American and British literature.

The exam includes approximately 90 multiple-choice questions to be answered in two separately timed 45-minute sections.

There is also an optional essay section that can be taken in addition to the multiple-choice exam. The essay section is graded by the institution that requests it. Contact the school where you would like to receive credit for your CLEP exam to see if they require the optional essay section for this exam.

## Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature exam require candidates to demonstrate the following abilities.

- Ability to read prose, poetry, and drama with understanding
- Ability to analyze the elements of a literary passage and to respond to nuances of meaning, tone, imagery, and style
- Ability to interpret metaphors, to recognize rhetorical and stylistic devices, to perceive relationships between parts and wholes, and to grasp a speaker's or author's attitudes
- Knowledge of the means by which literary effects are achieved
- Familiarity with the basic terminology used to discuss literary texts

The exam emphasizes comprehension, interpretation, and analysis of literary works. Only a minimum of specific factual knowledge is required; however, a broad knowledge of literature gained through reading widely is assumed, as

is a familiarity with basic literary terminology. The following outline indicates the relative emphasis given to the various types of literature and the periods from which the passages are taken.

➡	<i>Approximate Percent of Examination</i>
35-45%	Poetry
35-45%	Prose (fiction and nonfiction)
15-25%	Drama
50-65%	British literature
30-45%	American literature
5-15%	Works in translation
3-7%	Classical and pre-Renaissance
20-30%	Renaissance and 17th century
35-45%	18th and 19th centuries
25-35%	20th century

## Sample Questions

The 38 sample questions that follow are similar to questions on the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature exam, but they do not actually appear on it.

Before attempting to answer the sample questions, read all the information about the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature exam on the preceding pages. Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP exams are provided in Chapter 1.

Try to answer correctly as many questions as possible. Then compare your answers with the correct answers, given at the end of this examination guide.

**Directions:** The following samples consist of selections from literary works and questions on their content, form, and style. After reading a selection, choose the best answer to each question.

Questions 1-5

## The Child at Winter Sunset

The child at winter sunset,  
 Holding her breath in adoration of the peacock's tail  
 That spread its red — ah, higher and higher —  
 Wept suddenly. "It's going!"

- (5) The great fan folded;  
 Shortened; and at last no longer fought the cold, the dark.  
 And she on the lawn, comfortless by her father,  
 Shivered, shivered. "It's gone!"

- "Yes, this time. But wait,  
 (10) Darling. There will be other nights — some of them even better."  
 "Oh, no. It died." He laughed. But she did not.  
 It was her first glory.

- Laid away now in its terrible  
 Lead coffin, it was the first brightness she had ever  
 (15) Mourned. "Oh, no, it's dead." And he her father  
 Mourned too, for more to come.

"Child at Winter Sunset," from *Collected and New Poems, 1924-1963*, by Mark Van Doren.  
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 of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.

1. At the end of the poem, the father's attitude toward his daughter's crying  
 is best characterized as
- (A) patronizing and selfish  
 (B) patient but stern  
 (C) sympathetic and understanding  
 (D) condescending and detached  
 (E) good-humored but naïve

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

2. Which of the following lines most clearly presents the difference in perspective between the father and the daughter?
- (A) "And she on the lawn, comfortless by her father," (line 7)
  - (B) "'Darling. There will be other nights — some of them even better.' "  
(line 10)
  - (C) "'Oh, no. It died.' He laughed. But she did not." (line 11)
  - (D) "It was her first glory." (line 12)
  - (E) "And he her father / Mourned too, for more to come." (lines 15-16)
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
3. The image of the lead coffin (line 14) functions to
- (A) diminish and caricature the child's sorrow at the sunset
  - (B) confirm the significance of the child's feelings of loss
  - (C) indicate that the sunset symbolizes the child's own death
  - (D) suggest that the father is now mourning his dead child
  - (E) represent the specter of death hovering over the father
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
4. The last two lines of the poem suggest that the father
- (A) laments his own losses, both past and future
  - (B) fears that he will ultimately lose his daughter
  - (C) has come to mourn the sunset in the same way that his daughter does
  - (D) dreads his own inevitable death
  - (E) realizes that his child faces future sorrows that he cannot prevent
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
5. The central subject of the poem is
- (A) the indifference of fathers to the sensibilities of their daughters
  - (B) facing one's own death
  - (C) dealing with loss and sorrow
  - (D) the cruelty of time and the seasons
  - (E) the difficulty parents have in understanding their children
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

**Questions 6-13**

- “A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigor of the game.” This was the celebrated wish of old Sarah Battle (now with God) who, next to her devotions, loved a good game at whist. She was none of your lukewarm gamesters, your half-and-half players, who have no objection to take a
- (5) hand, if you want one to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game, and lose another; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card table, but are indifferent whether they play or no; and will desire an adversary, who has slipt a wrong card, to take it up and play another.
- (10) These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said, that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

- Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul; and would not, save upon a striking emergency,
- (15) willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took, and gave, no concessions. She hated favors. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight: cut and thrust. She held not her sword (her cards) “like a dancer.”
- (20) She sat bolt upright; and neither showed you her cards, nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side — their superstitions; and I have heard her declare, under the rose,\* that Hearts was her favourite suit.

\*under the rose: *sub rosa*, in confidence

6. The phrase “now with God” (line 2) reveals that Sarah Battle

- (A) was a religious person  
 (B) had an unexpected religious experience  
 (C) placed devotion to God ahead of whist  
 (D) has decided to give up cards  
 (E) is no longer alive

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

7. In line 2, "next to" is best paraphrased as
- (A) second only to
  - (B) besides
  - (C) before
  - (D) in addition to
  - (E) even more than
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
8. To Sarah Battle, the most significant characteristic of the triflers described in lines 3-12 is their
- (A) amiable sociability
  - (B) generosity toward their opponents
  - (C) nonchalant attitude toward whist
  - (D) ability to keep the game in perspective
  - (E) inability to play whist well
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
9. It can be inferred from the description of Sarah Battle's behavior at the whist table that she
- (A) would respect a superior opponent
  - (B) had an ironic sense of humor
  - (C) would do anything to win
  - (D) did not really enjoy playing whist
  - (E) enjoyed being catered to in whist
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
10. The most apparent metaphor in this character sketch is drawn from
- (A) nature
  - (B) religion
  - (C) finance
  - (D) swordplay
  - (E) gamesmanship
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
11. The attitude of the narrator toward Sarah Battle is chiefly one of
- (A) sarcastic anger
  - (B) affectionate respect
  - (C) tolerant understanding
  - (D) arrogant condescension
  - (E) fearful regard
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

12. The passage suggests all of the following about the narrator EXCEPT that the narrator
- (A) has a sense of humor
  - (B) has spent time in Sarah Battle's presence
  - (C) is an excellent whist player
  - (D) scorns casual whist players
  - (E) sees Sarah Battle's weakness
13. Which of the following best summarizes the structure of the passage?
- (A) The first paragraph concentrates on Sarah Battle's serious side; the second, on her fun-loving side.
  - (B) The first paragraph defines Sarah Battle by what she is not; the second, by what she is.
  - (C) The passage interprets, in turn, what Sarah Battle would regard as "A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigor of the game" (line 1).
  - (D) The passage moves from a discussion of the refinements of whist to an explanation of what makes Sarah Battle like the game.
  - (E) The first paragraph describes Sarah Battle as a gambler; the second, as a soldier of reform.

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)



Questions 14-19

- How many thousand of my poorest subjects  
 Are at this hour asleep! O sleep, O gentle sleep,  
 Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee  
 That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down  
 (5) And steep my senses in forgetfulness?  
 Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,  
 Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee  
 And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,  
 Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,  
 (10) Under the canopies of costly state,  
 And lulled with sound of sweetest melody?  
 O thou dull god, why liest thou with the vile  
 In loathsome beds, and leavest the kingly couch  
 A watch-case or a common 'larum bell?  
 (15) Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
 Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains  
 In cradle of the rude imperious surge  
 And in the visitation of the winds,  
 Who take the ruffian billows by the top,  
 (20) Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them  
 With deafening clamor in the slippery clouds,  
 That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?  
 Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose  
 To the wet sea-son in a hour so rude,  
 (25) And in the calmest and most stillest night,  
 With all appliances and means to boot,  
 Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down!  
 Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.
14. The dramatic situation suggested by the speech is that of a king
- (A) cast down from high estate
  - (B) concerned about the poverty of his subjects
  - (C) setting forth on a dangerous journey
  - (D) fearful of death
  - (E) restless with cares
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

15. The point of the anecdote in lines 15-22 is that
- (A) death is an inevitable extension of sleep
  - (B) common folk are accustomed to danger even though the king is not
  - (C) fear is best overcome by sleep
  - (D) evil inevitably overtakes the weak
  - (E) sleep comes to common folk even in perilous circumstances
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
16. In the context of the passage, “partial” (line 23) means
- (A) biased
  - (B) unsatisfying
  - (C) half-waking
  - (D) two-faced
  - (E) favorite
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
17. In line 27, “low” refers to
- (A) “my poorest subjects” (line 1)
  - (B) “sweetest melody” (line 11)
  - (C) “rude imperious surge” (line 17)
  - (D) “O partial sleep” (line 23)
  - (E) “a king” (line 27)
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
18. The speaker’s tone in addressing sleep changes from
- (A) confident to insecure
  - (B) bitter to victorious
  - (C) pleading to reproachful
  - (D) outraged to sarcastic
  - (E) angry to bewildered
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
19. With minor variations, the passage is written in
- (A) elegy form
  - (B) blank verse
  - (C) free verse
  - (D) heroic couplets
  - (E) the form of an ode
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 20-23

## In My Craft or Sullen Art

- In my craft or sullen art  
 Exercised in the still night  
 When only the moon rages  
 And the lovers lie abed
- (5) With all their griefs in their arms,  
 I labour by singing light  
 Not for ambition or bread  
 Or the strut and trade of charms  
 On the ivory stages
- (10) But for the common wages  
 Of their most secret heart.
- Not for the proud man apart  
 From the raging moon I write  
 On these spindrift\* pages
- (15) Nor for the towering dead  
 With their nightingales and psalms  
 But for the lovers, their arms  
 Round the griefs of the ages.  
 Who pay no praise or wages
- (20) Nor heed my craft or art.

\*spindrift: wind-blown sea spray

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20. The negative constructions “Not . . . But” (lines 7 and 10) and “Not . . . Nor . . . But” (lines 12, 15, and 17) are a feature of the structure of the poem that emphasizes a contrast between the
- (A) typical human motivations and the motivation of the speaker
  - (B) attitudes of the speaker toward himself and toward the lovers
  - (C) lovers embracing their own griefs and embracing the griefs of the ages
  - (D) attitude of the speaker toward the lovers and their attitude toward the speaker
  - (E) common craft of writing light verse and the sublime art of writing poetry
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
21. Which of the following is the antecedent of “their” (line 11)?
- (A) “lovers” (line 4)
  - (B) “griefs” (line 5)
  - (C) “strut and trade of charms” (line 8)
  - (D) “ivory stages” (line 9)
  - (E) “wages” (line 10)
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
22. The phrase “the towering dead / With their nightingales and psalms” (lines 15-16) alludes to the
- (A) oppressive weight of time and eternity
  - (B) poet’s physical and spiritual future
  - (C) voices of nature and the supernatural
  - (D) artificiality and futility of human institutions
  - (E) great poets and poetry of the past
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
23. How does the speaker feel about the response of the lovers to his efforts?
- (A) The speaker wishes to get vengeance by revealing the secrets of the lovers.
  - (B) The speaker will stop writing out of resentment for their indifference.
  - (C) The speaker will seek a new audience and relegate the lovers to the position of the proud man.
  - (D) The speaker will continue to write for the lovers regardless of their response.
  - (E) The speaker really writes only for himself and does not desire an audience.
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

Questions 24-28

All towns should be made capable of purification by fire, or of decay, within each half century. Otherwise, they become the hereditary haunts of vermin and noisomeness, besides standing apart from the possibility of such improvements as are constantly introduced into the rest of

- (5) man's contrivances and accommodations. It is beautiful, no doubt, and exceedingly satisfactory to some of our natural instincts, to imagine our far posterity dwelling under the same roof-tree as ourselves. Still, when people insist on building indestructible houses, they incur, or their children do, a misfortune analogous to that of the Sibyl, when she
- (10) obtained the grievous boon of immortality. So, we may build almost immortal habitations, it is true; but we cannot keep them from growing old, musty, unwholesome, dreary, full of death scents, ghosts, and murder stains; in short, such habitations as one sees everywhere in Italy, be they hovels or palaces.

24. The first sentence of the passage serves primarily to

- (A) state a fact  
 (B) express a generally accepted opinion  
 (C) startle by its unorthodoxy  
 (D) say the opposite of what the speaker means  
 (E) present an unwarranted conclusion

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

25. What misfortune of the Sibyl is implied in lines 7-10?

- (A) She lived in an indestructible house.  
 (B) She remained young forever.  
 (C) She did not get what she asked for.  
 (D) Her children lived in old houses.  
 (E) She could not die but continued to age.

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

26. The speaker objects to “almost immortal habitations” (lines 10-11) because they
- (A) start as palaces and end as hovels
  - (B) are full of memories, gloom, and violence
  - (C) are unhealthy for growing children
  - (D) satisfy natural inclinations
  - (E) are structurally unsound
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ
27. The speaker apparently regards changes brought about by modernization with
- (A) approval
  - (B) indifference
  - (C) resentment
  - (D) hesitancy
  - (E) bewilderment
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ
28. The speaker’s attitude toward houses in Italy is best described as one of
- (A) envy
  - (B) aversion
  - (C) ambivalence
  - (D) enthusiasm
  - (E) defensiveness
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ

Questions 29-33

Behind Me — dips Eternity —  
 Before Me — Immortality —  
 Myself — the Term between —  
 Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray,  
 (5) Dissolving into Dawn away,  
 Before the West begin —

'Tis Kingdoms — afterward — they say —  
 In perfect — pauseless Monarchy —  
 Whose Prince — is Son of None —  
 (10) Himself — His Dateless Dynasty —  
 Himself — Himself diversify —  
 In Duplicate divine —

'Tis Miracle before Me — then —  
 'Tis Miracle Behind — between  
 (15) A Crescent in the Sea —  
 With Midnight to the North of Her —  
 And Midnight to the South of Her —  
 and Maelstrom — in the Sky —

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29. The first stanza reveals the speaker's

- (A) vision of life in heaven
- (B) certainty of the truth of Christian doctrine
- (C) view of her location in the span of time
- (D) fear at facing a new day
- (E) longing for death

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

30. In which of the following sentences does the word “but” function grammatically in the same way as in line 4?
- (A) She likes him but for his table manners.
  - (B) He spoke softly but carried a big stick.
  - (C) She never comes but she stays for dinner.
  - (D) His strictness was but an expression of his love.
  - (E) But I would never intentionally undermine your efforts.
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ
31. The imagery in lines 4-5 suggests that death is
- (A) a beginning
  - (B) oblivion
  - (C) an eclipse
  - (D) release
  - (E) a journey
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ
32. Lines 16-18 suggest that the speaker sees life as
- (A) promising
  - (B) fulfilling
  - (C) corruptive
  - (D) empty
  - (E) terrifying
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ
33. All of the following techniques are used in the poem EXCEPT
- (A) alliteration
  - (B) off-rhyme
  - (C) onomatopoeia
  - (D) syntactic repetition
  - (E) metaphor
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ



### Questions 34-38

Besides the neutral expression that she wore when she was alone, Mrs. Freeman had two others, forward and reverse, that she used for all her human dealings. Her forward expression was steady and driving like the advance of a heavy truck. Her eyes never swerved to left or right but

- (5) turned as the story turned as if they followed a yellow line down the center of it. She seldom used the other expression because it was not often necessary for her to retract a statement, but when she did, her face came to a complete stop, there was an almost imperceptible movement of her black eyes, during which they seemed to be receding, and then
- (10) the observer would see that Mrs. Freeman, though she might stand there as real as several grain sacks thrown on top of each other, was no longer there in spirit. As for getting any thing across to her when this was the case, Mrs. Hopewell had given it up. She might talk her head off. Mrs. Freeman could never be brought to admit herself wrong on
- (15) any point. She would stand there and if she could be brought to say something, it was something like, "Well, I wouldn't of said it was and I wouldn't of said it wasn't," or letting her gaze range over the top shelf where there was an assortment of dusty bottles, she might remark, "I see you ain't ate many of them figs you put up last summer."

34. The metaphor suggested by “forward and reverse” in the opening sentence is also suggested by all of the following words EXCEPT

- (A) "advance" (line 4)  
(B) "swerved" (line 4)  
(C) "turned" (line 5)  
(D) "retract" (line 7)  
(E) "stop" (line 8)

Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ

35. What quality of Mrs. Freeman's character does the controlling image of the passage suggest?

- (A) Her forbearance  
(B) Her insecurity  
(C) Her rigidity  
(D) Her proper manners  
(E) Her sense of irony

Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ Ⓔ

36. That Mrs. Freeman “might stand there as real as several grain sacks thrown on top of each other” (lines 10-11) suggests that she is all of the following EXCEPT
- (A) plain and down-to-earth
  - (B) undecided in her opinions
  - (C) clearly visible
  - (D) part of the country scene
  - (E) closed and contributing nothing at present
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
37. The kind of remark Mrs. Freeman makes in lines 16-17 is called
- (A) a cliché
  - (B) an allusion
  - (C) a non sequitur
  - (D) a circular argument
  - (E) a metaphoric statement
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)
38. Mrs. Freeman’s remarks are best described as
- (A) self-protective
  - (B) self-censuring
  - (C) self-analytical
  - (D) aggressive
  - (E) contemptuous
- (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

## Optional Free-Response Section

The optional free-response section of the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature examination requires candidates to demonstrate their ability to write well-organized critical essays. Candidates are asked to write two essays within a 90-minute time period. In the first essay, they are asked to discuss a poem printed in the test book; in the second essay, they must apply a general literary statement to a work of recognized literary merit that they have read. The following is an example of the kind of question a candidate might be asked to address in the second essay:

The settings in works of literature — particular houses, cities, localities; particular institutions; particular periods of time — often have great influence on the development of a central character. Choose a novel, short story, or play of recognized literary merit that you have read. Briefly describe its setting. Then discuss in detail how the setting affects and, in turn, reveals the character of the protagonist.

In responding to the questions, candidates are expected to avoid vague generalities, irrelevant philosophizing, and unnecessary plot summaries. They should pay particular attention to the quality of their writing (organization, sentence structure, diction, clarity, the relevance of their illustrations to the questions asked, and the critical perceptiveness of their answers).

For additional information, read the sections on “Taking Essay Exams,” in Chapter 2, and “How Essays Are Graded,” in Chapter 3.

## Study Resources

The most relevant preparation for the Analyzing and Interpreting Literature exam is attentive and reflective reading of the various literary genres of poetry, drama, and prose. There are several ways to prepare for the exam:

1. Read a variety of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction.
2. Read critical analyses of various literary works.
3. Write your own analysis and interpretation of the works you read.
4. Discuss with others the meaning of the literature you read.

Textbooks used in college courses in analysis and interpretation of literature contain a sampling of literary works in a variety of genres. They also contain material that can help you to comprehend the sense and intent of literary works and to recognize the devices used by writers to convey that sense and intent. To prepare for the exam, you should study the contents of at least one college textbook, which you can find in most college bookstores. You would do well to consult two or three texts because they do vary somewhat in content, approach, and emphasis. For example, Perrine’s book is a basic introduction to reading literature; Edgar Roberts emphasizes literary analysis; books by Sylvan Barnet and Perrine include glossaries of literary terms.

Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP exams are given in Chapter 1.

## *Answers to Sample Questions*

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### Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

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|-------|-------|
| 1. C  | 26. B |
| 2. C  | 27. A |
| 3. B  | 28. B |
| 4. E  | 29. C |
| 5. C  | 30. D |
| 6. E  | 31. A |
| 7. A  | 32. E |
| 8. C  | 33. C |
| 9. A  | 34. D |
| 10. D | 35. C |
| 11. B | 36. B |
| 12. C | 37. C |
| 13. B | 38. A |
| 14. E |       |
| 15. E |       |
| 16. A |       |
| 17. A |       |
| 18. C |       |
| 19. B |       |
| 20. A |       |
| 21. A |       |
| 22. E |       |
| 23. D |       |
| 24. C |       |
| 25. E |       |